

Turkish rescuers dig out 48 avalanche survivors

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (R) — Rescue teams dug out 48 avalanche survivors on Saturday after fresh snowfalls in south east Turkey killed at least 39 people and took the overall death toll to 205. Five of those rescued were road clearance workers who had survived four days buried in their car after a snowslide buried it. But fresh avalanches hit the mainly-Kurdish region on Saturday and officials said that with blizzards hampering rescue efforts hopes were fading of finding more people alive in a dozen villages buried on Friday. "Our job is in the hands of God. Roads to most villages are cut by snow. Some of them are still under the threat of fresh snowfalls," said Nurettin Guven, deputy governor of Sirnak province. "We should be emptying the villages to avoid further deaths but what can you do when there are thousands of them?" he said, adding that the region was under 4.5 metres of snow. The deputy governor of the south east region, Ahmet Erturk, said the death toll from snowslides this month had reached 205 after two more bodies were found in Sirnak's Akcay village. An avalanche killed 31 people there on Friday.

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Palestinian woman's heart fails as Israeli soldiers open fire

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli troops fired rubber bullets at the car of a Palestinian woman rushing her mother to hospital in the occupied West Bank on Saturday. The woman was wounded and her 60-year-old mother died instantly of a heart attack, Palestinian sources said. The Palestinian sources said the woman, Na'ima Rabaia, 37, had permission from a soldier to leave her house in Irtas near Bethlehem and take her sick mother Bahiya to hospital. Rabaia was wounded in the face.

3 robbers beheaded in Riyadh

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Three men were beheaded Friday for armed robbery on a house where they also forced the landlady to be photographed in the nude for blackmail, the interior ministry announced. The state said that the three were convicted by the Islamic court of "spreading evil and violating the sanctities of homes" and thereby were beheaded. It named the three but did not give their nationalities.

Sudanese bakery seized

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudanese authorities have seized a Khartoum bakery because its loaves were too small, a newspaper said on Saturday. On Monday the government raised the price of a loaf from 50 piastres to 1.25 pounds and ordered its weight cut by half to 60 grammes (two ounces). The deputy governor of Khartoum state, Colonel Younis Abdul Fatah, ordered the offending bakery to stand trial before a public court. His bakery will now be run by the popular committee of the area, Al Sudan Al Hadith (modern Sudan) reported.

3 fishermen drown off Lebanon

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — Three fishermen drowned when gale-force winds swept them into the stormy sea off northern Lebanon, police said Saturday. In Turkey, the death toll from avalanches the day before climbed further. A police spokesman said the three were "swallowed by the water" off the northern port of Tripoli on Friday. Their bodies were washed ashore later. Rescue workers were trying to open up the roads leading to villages cut off by the snow in east Lebanon's Bekaa valley and the mountains to provide bread, fuel and other supplies.

Egypt arrests owners of opinion poll firm

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian authorities have arrested the owners of a company that ran opinion polls on Islamic politics and charged them with belonging to an illegal organisation, security sources said on Saturday. Security police raided the offices of a Cairo computer firm owned by the three defendants and found two boxes containing completed questionnaires on issues such as price rises and Islamic political movements, the sources added. State prosecutors had charged the three with "belonging to an illegal organisation" and detained them pending further investigations, the sources said.

French police object to guarding Michel Aoun

NICE (R) — France's police union said on Saturday it resented having to guard exiled Lebanese Christian leader Michel Aoun and suggested the money and manpower would be better spent elsewhere. General Aoun, who led a bloody campaign from 1988 to 1990 to expel Syrian forces from Lebanon, lives in a luxury villa overlooking the sea in the southern French port of Marseille. "There are 180 policemen taking turns in six-hour shifts to guard him permanently," said Philippe Lebrun, leader of the independent National Police-men's Union, told the newspaper Nice-Matin. "That means 180 less men on the streets."

U.S., Israel fail to agree on loan guarantees

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States and Israel, deeply divided over Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, failed on Friday to agree on terms for the Jewish state to receive \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees.

Secretary of State James Baker discussed the issue with Israeli Ambassador Zelman Shoval, but the two could not agree on Washington's insistence that Israel stop building new houses in settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"There is agreement on some points. There is not agreement on some other points," Mr. Shoval told reporters after the meeting. Mr. Shoval said Israel did not think settlements ought to be linked to what Israel views as its request for purely humanitarian aid to absorb hundreds of thousands of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

But he added, "obviously, that view is not entirely shared by the United States."

The two agreed to meet again after Mr. Baker's return from the former Soviet Union around Feb. 18. Mr. Shoval said he still believed the United States wanted to help Israel meet the immigration challenge in principle.

The envoy had been expected to offer a slowdown of the settlement drive, but no freeze, in exchange for the desperately needed funds which Israel needs to help its tottering economy bear the strains of the mass immigration.

But Jewish leaders seemed pessimistic that an agreement would be possible because of the thorny issue of settlements, to which Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is committed but which the United States wants stopped.

Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat from Vermont who met Mr. Baker immediately after Mr. Shoval, told reporters: "I think (an agreement) is possible, but it is not possible today. The parties are far enough apart that it is not possible."

Mr. Leahy pushed his plan to reduce U.S. loan guarantees by one dollar for every dollar Israel spends on settlements, but said agreement must be reached by March 31, when a temporary measure to fund U.S. foreign policy runs out.

An Israeli official in Washington said Israel was ready to accept the Leahy formula if it could agree with Washington exactly what would be covered.

He said Mr. Shoval and Mr. Baker also agreed Israel and the United States would begin talks immediately on reforming Israel's economy, another U.S. condition for providing the aid.

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But the official said Israel was not prepared to accept political dictates in exchange for the loan guarantees.

Today it's settlements, tomorrow it may be something altogether different," the official said.

Mr. Leahy noted that President George Bush has said he will veto any bill that allows settlements in the occupied territories.

"It does not take a rocket scientist to know that at a time when foreign aid itself is probably the least popular item that Congress will face this year, that no Congress is going to pass a foreign aid bill over presidential veto," Mr. Leahy said.

At the first Baker-Shoval meeting two weeks ago, Mr. Baker proposed a formula whereby Israel could complete the 9,000 housing units in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip currently under construction but not build more.

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The Associated Press moved the photo of Saba Tawil who, according to her family sources, was Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat recently. One of the sources said the couple had been married for a few weeks now, but that the family would not officially announce the marriage until the 63-year-old chairman of the PLO declared it himself. An official announcement was expected in a day or two, Raymond Tawil, the "bride's" mother was quoted as saying last week. There was no explanation, however, as to why such an announcement has been delayed this far. Saba Tawil, 28, had been working as an economic adviser to Mr. Arafat, based as he is in Tunis.



Israelis kill 3 Palestinian gunmen in Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (R) — Israeli soldiers killed three Palestinian guerrillas in South Lebanon on Saturday when they tried to enter the Jewish state's self-declared "border security zone" there, security sources said.

The radical Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC), led by Abu Nidal, claimed responsibility for the attack saying it was intended to show opposition to Arab-Israeli peace talks.

An FRC statement released in Beirut said "more than 20 enemy soldiers were killed or wounded" in the clash.

But the security sources said two Israeli soldiers were wounded in the machinegun duel between an Israeli patrol and the guerrillas near the village of Brasheet.

The Israelis had spotted guerrillas trying to sneak into the zone from the village, the sources added.

The Israeli army said in Jerusalem two of its soldiers had been slightly wounded and all the guerrillas killed.

Security sources said earlier the guerrillas belonged to a pro-Tehran Lebanese Muslim group. Israeli troops and their South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia allies attacked Brasheet and the nearby villages of Shaqra and Qabriqha with mortar fire. There were no reports of casualties.

The pro-Iranian Hizbollah (Party of God) said its guerrillas detonated a bomb near an SLA patrol in Dehli Village on the edge of the zone on Saturday afternoon, killing several militiamen.

Iran says weapons no threat to Arabs, U.S. shall not become 'gendarme of region'

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iran said on Saturday its military forces are no threat to its Gulf neighbours but vowed not to allow the United States become the "gendarme of the region."

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Western reports of Iran amassing sophisticated weapons were "exaggerated and misleading" the Iranian news agency IRNA reported.

"The arsenal of the Islamic Republic, whatever it used to be or is, poses no danger to Persian Gulf littoral states," he said in a speech to air force officers.

Mr. Khamenei, whose country condemned a 10-year defence pact Washington signed with Kuwait last year, said reports of an Iranian arms buildup were aimed at frightening Gulf Arabs who are warming towards Iran after its neutrality in the Gulf war.

"We have never wanted, and do not want, to be the gendarme of the region," he said. "Nor will we allow any power either regional or from outside — especially the United States which is trying to play the gendarme — to assume that role."

Iran, with 58 million people, is more populous than all Gulf Arab states combined. It has the longest shoreline in the Gulf and the biggest army in the region after Iraq's defeat in Kuwait last year.

Iran disclosed on Wednesday its air force had deployed Soviet-made Sukhoi-24 attack planes and F-7 aircraft — a Chinese version of the Soviet-designed MiG-21 fighter.

Akawi's funeral turns into national demonstration

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Thousands of Palestinian mourners, shaking fists and chanting "struggle, struggle," on Saturday marched behind the open coffin of an Arab activist who died in an Israeli prison amid allegations of torture.

The Jerusalem funeral of Mustafa Akawi, 35, turned into a demonstration of nationalist fervor. His body was draped in an outlawed Palestinian flag and mourners waved flags and chanted the Palestinian anthem "Homeland, Homeland."

Hundreds of Israeli riot police, some on horseback, lined the procession route from Akawi's home in the Wadi Joz area to the Al Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest shrines, several blocks away. There were no clashes between mourners and police.

Police set up roadblocks around Jerusalem and turned away Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip en route to the funeral.

Akawi died in a Shin Bet secret service lockup in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron on Tuesday, a day after complaining to a military judge he was severely beaten by his interrogators. The judge ordered a medical

home in the Wadi Joz area to the Al Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest shrines, several blocks away. There were no clashes between mourners and police.

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Bodies of two Palestinians found in Gaza Strip

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — The bodies of two Palestinians slain by masked men were found in the occupied Gaza Strip on Saturday, the Israeli army and Arab reporters said. The motives for the slayings were not known. In the Khan Yunis refugee camp, Arab militants killed 22-year-old Wael Suleiman Lamur with pistol shots as he walked in the street, Palestinian reporters said. The army confirmed the death and said it was being investigated. In Gaza City, the body of 21-year-old Fauzi Abu Sido was found in an orange grove, Arab reporters said. Abu Sido was kidnapped from his home by masked men Friday night and was strangled and knifed to death, the reporters said. His brother, Wafik, is an advisor to the Palestinian team at the Middle East peace talks. Israeli radio quoted local residents as saying political disagreements apparently were not a motive for the slaying. The army cited possible criminal motives. In Gaza's Rafah refugees camp, masked men broke into a mosque Friday afternoon and attacked a local mukhtar, or traditional leader, with axes, an army official said. The victim, Abdul Mansour Abu Karshen, 65, suffered serious head injuries, the official said.

Akawi's funeral turns into national demonstration

Detention triggered heart attack-doctor

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Thousands of Palestinian mourners, shaking fists and chanting "struggle, struggle," on Saturday marched behind the open coffin of an Arab activist who died in an Israeli prison amid allegations of torture.

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MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Lebanese president to Syria for talks with Assad

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's President Elias Hrawi left for Damascus on Saturday for Middle East talks with Syrian leader Hafez Al Assad. President Hrawi, accompanied by Foreign Minister Faris Bouze, left by a private jet from Beirut airport. Airport sources said, The two leaders would discuss their positions on further rounds of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. Beirut and Damascus boycotted last month's multilateral talks in Moscow saying no progress had been made on substantial issues in the bilateral negotiations in Washington. Lebanon has yet to answer on an invitation it had received on Thursday to take part in the Washington meetings, expected to resume on Feb. 24. Lebanon wants an Israeli withdrawal from a border strip to the south in line with 1978 U.N. Security Council resolution 425.

Refinery workers ended protest — official

NICOSIA (R) — Workers at Tehran oil refinery began a hunger strike over wages last month, the first protest by oil workers reported since soon after the 1979 revolution, but an official said on Saturday the strike had now ended. The head of public relations at the oil ministry, Mohammad Hossein Abdolazizi, said up to 50 workers had taken part. They abandoned the hunger strike about two weeks ago after Oil Minister Gholamreza Aqazadeh met their representatives and promised to look into their demands, he told Reuters. It was the first official confirmation of any unrest to the oil industry in Iran, one of the world's biggest oil producers. Iran is suffering an acute fuel shortage, attributed by opposition groups to widespread strikes at several refineries. But Mr. Abdolazizi denied this, saying the protest was limited to the Tehran plant, Iran's third highest refinery. "Their demands were generally about wages. It was a limited protest in terms of numbers and did not extend to sit-ins or strikes," Mr. Abdolazizi said by telephone from Tehran. "Thirty, 40 or 50 people refused to eat food, but work did not stop... you could call it a sort of hunger strike." Mr. Aqazadeh had told the ministry to draw up an improved wage structure by the end of the Iranian year on March 20, he added. The oil industry, dating back to the early years of the century, is one of Iran's oldest. Iranian governments have always been especially sensitive to protest by oil workers, who at crucial times have proved capable of stopping the flow of crude exports which bring in the bulk of Iran's hard cash. A strike late in 1978 shut down the industry and played a key role in the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Civil servants to other departments often complain that the oil ministry uses its privileged position to pamper some of its 100,000 employees with higher salaries and benefits. The refinery protest was the first in the oil industry since tensions in 1979 and 1980, when purges were carried out in all economic sectors. Iranian media largely ignored the protest, which started at about the beginning of January. On Jan. 9 the headline newspaper Salam reported a gathering in which one striking worker said they had been forced to take action because oil ministry officials had ignored their repeated demands for more than a year. Another worker complained that, while workers had shown restraint during the hard days of the 1980-88 war with Iraq, management had now deprived them of interest-free loans and other benefits envisaged in both oil ministry and labour ministry regulations.

Former Afghan premier shot and wounded in Kabul

KABUL (R) — Former Afghan Prime Minister Sultan Ali Kistmand was shot and wounded by an unknown gunman on Friday as he attended prayers at a Kabul mosque. Vice-President Abdul Wahid Sarobi later told a crowd outside the Red Cross hospital, where Kistmand was initially taken, that his life was not in danger. He was treated for a wound below one eye and then taken to a military hospital, Red Cross spokesman Gary Millet said. "Although it is a head wound and one always has to be careful he should be O.K. He was lucky, it could have been worse," he said. Kabul Radio said Kistmand's unidentified attacker escaped from the Imam Hassan Mosque in a suburb south-west of Kabul. Kistmand was prime minister for much of the 1980s. He was later made vice president. He resigned in July from the ruling Watan (homeland) Party and accused the Kabul leadership of paying only lip service to the rights of ethnic minorities. In an interview with Reuters in Kabul on Thursday, he called on the United Nations to ensure minority rights are fully protected before the implementation of a political settlement to the 13-year-old Afghan civil war. Ethnic Pushtuns have ruled Afghanistan for 250 years but the war has heightened political awareness among minorities and given them weapons to back their demands for a greater say. Kistmand, a minority Hazara from Afghanistan's mostly Shia Muslim central region, said it was in the long-term interests of Pushtuns to share power.

Iranian charged in Denmark for smuggling illegal immigrants

COPENHAGEN (R) — An Iranian handed over by Germany has been charged with smuggling almost 200 illegal immigrants across the border into Denmark, police in the Danish border town of Padborg said on Friday. Amir Heidari was charged in court on Thursday shortly after being handed over to Danish police at a border crossing near Padborg. He was remanded in custody for four weeks, a police officer said. Denmark's Ritzau news agency said Heidari had been arrested in Frankfurt in May and charged with taking 67 illegal immigrants into Germany. The officer said Heidari, who lives in Sweden, was suspected of smuggling many other illegal immigrants across the border into Denmark and an investigation was under way. Ritzau said he was believed to be the leader of one of Europe's biggest cross-border human smuggling operations.

General Dynamics gets payment for Saudi contract

WASHINGTON (R) — General Dynamics Corp. has been awarded a \$157.8 million payment for full-scale development work on 315 front-line M-1A2 battle tanks for Saudi Arabia, the Pentagon said on Friday. The payment is part of a \$416.6 million contract awarded to the company two months ago to provide the upgraded tanks by March 31, 1994, the army said. They would be especially configured for desert warfare. The work is part of a \$3.1 billion Bush administration plan announced in 1990 to sell the Saudis 315 tanks, 30 tank recovery vehicles, Bradley fighting vehicles, trucks, support equipment and facilities for the arms, according to Major Pete Keating, an army spokesman.

U.N. says Iraq may have Scud missiles

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations said that Iraq may still have Scud missiles, despite international requirements that it destroy the weapons.

Iraq had not been cooperating fully with a U.N. commission overseeing elimination of its weapons of mass destruction, specifically when it came to eliminating the Soviet-designed Scud missiles, Rolf Ekeus, chairman of the U.N. commission wrote in a letter released Friday.

"There remains substantial uncertainty whether all missiles subject to Resolution 687, primarily Scud or Scud variants, have been declared as required," wrote Mr. Ekeus.

Resolution 687, approved last year, requires Iraq to destroy, remove or render harmless all its ballistic missiles of a certain range as well as repair and production facilities for the weapons.

The letter was attached to a report by U.N. Security-General

Boutros Boutros-Ghali that records several Iraqi violations of U.N. resolutions.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali's report details Iraq's refusal to cooperate fully with U.N. inspections of its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons facilities.

"The special commission can have no confidence that Iraq has disclosed the full scope and nature of its programmes for fissile material production and of its research and development efforts in respect of nuclear weapons," Mr. Ekeus said in the letter attached to Dr. Boutros-Ghali's report.

The Security Council reviewed the report Wednesday and decided not to lift sanctions against Iraq. Some diplomats hinted that even tougher punishment, such as military action, could be considered.

Iraq has repeatedly appealed for an end to the sanctions.

Egypt takes hands-off stand on Saddam's tenure

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt has reiterated its policy not to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs, disassociating itself on Saturday from reported U.S. efforts to overthrow President Saddam Hussein.

The restatement came in response to a report in the New York Times that Washington was consulting Egypt and Saudi Arabia about how to remove the Iraqi president.

"Egypt is not party to any plan aimed at overthrowing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein," the government said in an anonymous official statement to local reporters.

Quoting sources in President Bush's administration, the New York Times reported Friday that CIA Director Robert Gates is discussing with Egyptian and Saudi leaders diplomatic, military and covert efforts being mounted against President Saddam.

White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, travelling with President Bush to California, confirmed the Central Intelligence Agency chief's presence in the Middle East but would not comment further.

Egypt is a close friend of the United States and played a key role in helping Washington

fashion the military alliance that drove Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait.

The Egyptian statement appeared designed to preserve Egypt's image among the Arabs by dispelling any impression that Cairo is gangling up with the United States against an Arab country on an internal issue.

Egyptian officials refused to discuss whether Mr. Gates has visited Egypt. Requests to the U.S. embassy for comment went unanswered.

"Egypt is pursuing a clear policy based on non-interference in the internal affairs of any Arab or foreign country," the government statement said. "It is sticking to its principles founded on respect for the will of peoples."

President Hosni Mubarak asserted in several newspaper interviews last year that whether President Saddam remains in power after his military defeat in the Gulf war was for the Iraqis alone to decide.

President Mubarak told the Israeli newspaper Maariv in November: "We continue to maintain that the president of any country is the responsibility of that country alone and no other country's."

OAU head pledges support for Somalia peace efforts

U.N. says Somalia talks to go ahead

NAIROBI (R) — A United Nations special envoy said on Friday that talks on ways to end Somalia's civil war would take place in New York next week even if warring factions did not attend.

"Even if they're not there the talks will go ahead... if they come it would be good because then we can talk about the nitty-gritty of a ceasefire," U.N. Under-Secretary-General James Jonah told reporters in Nairobi.

He said heads of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Arab League and Islamic Conference Organisation would attend the talks along with U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali next Wednesday.

Thousands have been killed and wounded in nearly three months of vicious clan feuding between rival warlords Ali Mahdi Mohammed and Mohammed Farah Aided in the capital Mogadishu.

The Horn of Africa nation was first plunged into anarchy over a year ago when guerrillas ousted Dictator Mohammed Siad Barre and turned to fighting each other, carving up the state into tribal territories ruled by gunmen.

Mr. Jonah said Ali Mahdi had announced he would attend the talks and that Aided had promised to send a three-man delegation in his place, but it was still unclear whether the factions would be able to leave the war-torn country.

Mr. Aided has asked for the talks to be postponed and made no mention of discussing a ceasefire, Mr. Jonah added.

The U.N. envoy said the question of whether to send a foreign peace-keeping force if last month's ceasefire call by the Security Council fails to have any effect would be discussed at the New York talks.

Relief officials visiting Mogadishu reported that fighting was raging on. Calls are mounting for international troops to be sent in to impose a truce, by force if necessary.

In Lagos, Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida, chairman of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), said on Friday that Africa would try to help end the civil war in Somalia, state radio said.

Argentina bans sale of nuclear equipment to Iran

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (R) — Argentina has cancelled a \$18 million deal to supply nuclear equipment to Iran because of concern it might be used to develop weapons, a foreign ministry official said this week.

"Argentina has a commitment to sell this type of equipment to countries that have signed safeguards, or international controls, so they can be relied on not to intend to develop nuclear weapons," the official told Reuters.

Iran has not signed a nuclear safeguard treaty.

"If we carried out this deal with Iran we would be no better than Cuba or Libya," he added.

Last month the Argentine government suspended a shipment of unspecified nuclear equipment to Iran, saying it wanted to review the contract. A provincial newspaper reported at the time that Argentina had suspended the \$18 million deal under pressure from the United States.

The Rio Negro daily said the U.S. State Department had let Argentine Foreign Minister Guido Di Tella know that it was concerned that Argentina could be helping Iran to expand its nuclear programme.

The equipment which was to be shipped to Iran was manufactured by INVAP, jointly owned by the Argentine National Atomic Commission and the province of Rio Negro.

Argentina, which has Latin America's most developed atomic programme, helped Iran serve the core of a nuclear plant in 1988.

Fierce snow, blockade intensify Kurds' suffering

ABOARD A U.S. ARMY UH-60 HELICOPTER OVER IRAQ (AP) — The harshest winter in 20 years is blocking delivery of relief supplies to thousands of Iraq's already suffering from an economic blockade imposed by Saddam Hussein.

"They're getting snow up to their dam roofs," said Col. Dick Naab, commander of the Western Military Coalition Office in northern Iraq.

He spoke to a reporter Saturday in a U.S. Army helicopter that dropped blankets and food parcels on villages barely peeking out from mountains of snow.

Since early January, U.S. helicopters have delivered more than 90 tonnes of flour, rice, cooking oil and other supplies to snow-bound Kurdish villages in northern Iraq. Much of the aid was contributed by relief organisations unable to transport it on roads that have become mere memories.

"They (Kurds) are in the same part of the world where they're having avalanches," Col. Naab said, referring to a recent disaster in nearby Turkey that claimed about 200 lives.

"The difference is here they have no means to report it." Between the snow and a four-month old government blockade, Col. Naab added, "you've got people on the brink."

A reporter glimpsed a few homes that appeared to have been virtually buried by the snow. Kurdish and coalition officials could only confirm one death due to exposure but said there could be many more.

From the air, much of northern Iraq is a sea of white, punctuated by spindly tree branches and half-buried telephone poles in a communications system that has long since failed to work.

At Qonabasi, a village of half a dozen stone houses engulfed by snow, anxious residents and children ran outside and waved wildly as the helicopter approached. A U.S. soldier tossed out blankets, cans of cooking oil and sacks of rice, which sank into the soft snow.

Residents of other villages watched in disappointment from roof tops when the aircraft passed them by.

The intense snowstorms of recent weeks are the latest misfortune for the long suffering Iraqi Kurds. Many of those hardest hit had only rebuilt their homes last fall, after returning from the Turkish and Iranian borders with the help of a U.S.-led allied force. Their dramatic flight last year, following their failed uprising after the Gulf war, had caught the attention of the world.

But, while the Kurds woo control of a strip of northern Iraq, Saddam has been applying increasing economic pressure in recent months.

Archaeologists say new farming projects in Iraq threaten ancient sites

BOSTON (AP) — The Iraqi government is so desperate to feed its people it has started big farming projects that could inflict major damage on valuable archaeological sites.

"I kind of understand why they would want to go out and make the desert bloom," said Paul Zimansky, professor of archaeology at Boston University. "Give the strains in Iraqi society, nobody has time to worry much about antiquities."

Mr. Zimansky returned last month from Iraq, where he saw large-scale plowing and newly dug irrigation ditches on land

known to harbour archaeological sites.

He and his wife, Elizabeth Stoebe, a professor of anthropology at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, tried to visit the site of a Mesopotamian city they were excavating before the war.

But an area of cultivated land about 20 square kilometres blocked the way to the 4,000-year-old city of Mashkan-Shapir. They don't know if the ancient site, about 135 kilometres southeast of Baghdad, is intact.

"If a site like that has been plowed up, we have lost all that

information on how an old Babylonian city is organised," Mr. Zimansky said. "What we don't know, we can't put a price tag on."

Mesopotamia, in what is now the heart of modern Iraq, was one of the world's first civilisations.

Before the Gulf war, Iraq's agency overseeing antiquities had so much clout it could forbid military manoeuvres near an archaeological site, Mr. Stoebe said. Now the department has no working telephone and staff workers have to borrow cars.



Located on the Giza plateau just west of Cairo, the great Sphinx is one of the largest limestone carvings in the world. It stands 66 feet

high and is 240 feet long. The statue is of a crouched lion with the hooded head of a man.

Scientists clash over age of Egyptian sphinx

By Paul Reccer
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Seismic studies that conclude the great Sphinx is 2,000 years older than traditionally believed were blasted as "pseudoscience" during a heated debate between experts.

Robert Schoch of Boston University told a meeting Friday of the American association for the advancement of science that he believes the great Sphinx was sculpted between 5000 and 7000 B.C., based on the erosion of the massive limestone carving.

The finding has outraged scholars of Egyptian history who say it disputes generations of archaeological research into the

great Sphinx and the civilisation that built it.

Located on the Giza plateau just west of Cairo, the great Sphinx is one of the largest limestone carvings in the world. It stands 66 feet high and is 240 feet long. The statue is of a crouched lion with the hooded head of a man.

Scholars of Egyptian history have long held that it was carved out of a solid limestone formation in 2500 B.C., during what is called the old kingdom fourth dynasty.

They say it bore the likeness of Pharaoh Khafre. A nearby tomb carved out of limestone is thought to have been built at the same time.

Mr. Schoch said Friday that his seismic studies clearly show that the Sphinx is much more weathered or eroded than the nearby tomb. If the tomb is dated at 2500 B.C., the great Sphinx has to be more than 2,000 years older, he said.

"The weathering profiles on the Sphinx are indications that something is different," he said. "You see very distinct differences in the seismic profile."

Mark Lehner, a University of Chicago archaeologist who has studied Egyptian history for more than 25 years, heatedly rejected Mr. Schoch's findings.

"You don't overthrow Egyptian history based on one phenomenon like a weathering pro-

file," he said.

Mr. Lehner and others argued with Mr. Schoch through a four-hour debate, through a news conference and then into a hallway confrontation where voices were raised and the words skated on the icy edge of scientific politeness.

The major fact disputing Mr. Schoch's conclusion, Mr. Lehner said, is the absence of any evidence that a civilisation advanced enough to carve the great Sphinx existed in Egypt from 5000 to 7000 B.C.

"If the Sphinx was built by an earlier culture, where is the evidence of that civilisation?" Mr. Lehner asked.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30	Les Badabois
17:45	Getosope
18:10	L'école des Fars
19:00	News in French
19:15	Carpet de notes
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Empty Nest
21:10	Doc. "Equinox"
22:00	News in English
22:20	Switched at Birth

PRAYER TIMES

05:01	Fajr
06:20	(Sunrise) Duha
11:50	Dhuhr
14:53	Asr
17:20	Maghreb
18:38	Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifich Tel. 810740
Assumption of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terraviva Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 823824, 654932
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be cold, cloudy and rainy at times, with snow fall expected on high mountains. Winds will be southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Aqaba 1/14
Dead Sea 0/6
Jordan Valley 7/11

Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 5, Aqaba 17. Humidity readings:

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyem 602507
Dr. Joseph Smith 770560
Dr. Mohammad Manas 741444
Firas pharmacy 661912
Al Asmaa pharmacy 670555
Nairoukh pharmacy 626272
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yaacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

IRBID:
Dr. Ayman Abul Hajja (—)
Al Shraza pharmacy 275025

ZARQA:
Dr. Khawar Ja'ari (—)

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 638251
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repair 623108
Abdullah Telephone Repair 661101
Jordan Television 773111

Khalilich pharmacy 985417

Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/332
Khaldil Maternity, J. Amn 642816
Al-Khalil Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mathas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 6641714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 843845
Al-Mustashir Hospital 6672719
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Mutajreen 7770173
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 7751126
Army, Marka 8916115
Queen Alia Hospital 6224050
Amal Hospital 674153

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)83323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)987532
Al Hana Modern Hospital (09)99959

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275535
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275
Ibn Al Nafces Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (00)3300-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
09:00 Jeddah (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
11:10 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:45 Cairo (RJ)
13:00 Larnaca (CY)
13:00 Beirut (ME)
13:15 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
13:20 London, Brussels (RJ)

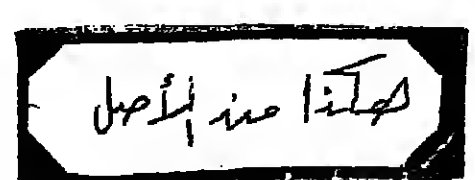
Other Flights (Terminal 2)

16:25	Cairo (MS)
16:40	Beirut, Rome (AZ)
16:50	Moscow (SU)
19:10	Larnaca (CY)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple (red)	700/700
Apple (yellow)	500/500
Banana	500/450
Banana (Muhannar)	550/500
Beans	700/600
Cabbage	180/120
Carrot	200/150
Cauliflower	220/160
Cucumbers (large)	300/250
Cucumbers (small)	500/400
Eggplant	250/200
Garlic	650/550
Grapefruit	180/120
Lemon	180/120
Marrow (large)	300/250
Marrow (small)	200/150
Onion (dry)	200/150
Onion (green)	220/170
Oranges	420/250
Pepper (hot)	1000/800
Pepper (sweet)	480/420
Potato	300/250
Radish	300/250
Sage	600/500
Spinach	200/150
Tomato	280/220



Calls for farmers' insurance fund grow as damage from storms mount

AMMAN (J.T.) — The creation of an agricultural insurance fund will positively contribute towards settling many of farmers' problems which every year crop up as a result of frost or floods that damage vast areas of farmlands, particularly in Jordan Valley region, Agriculture Minister Fayez Khasawneh said Saturday.

Such a fund has become essential to promote the agricultural sector and the Ministry of Agriculture is now seriously seeking to create the fund in cooperation with the private sector, said the minister.

An agricultural insurance fund will be as important to farmers as insurance taken by people on cars, fires and other risks to public property and will compensate the farmers for losses, the minister said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

On Friday, the minister announced that the government was offering compensation to farmers whose lands were either inundated by flood water from the recent storms or hit by frost which damaged large areas of vegetables and fruit. The minister also announced that the government was offering easy term loans to the farmers to enable them to



Fayez Khasawneh

resume their activities.

The Jordan news agency pointed out that it was His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan who proposed the creation of this fund as far back as 1987 to offer compensation to farmers in times of natural disasters.

Since 1987, it said, Jordan's farmlands in the Jordan Valley region have repeatedly faced frost, drought or floods, further exacerbating the farmers' plight and causing one crisis after another in production operations.

Interviewed by Petra, the director general of the Jordan Farmers Federation (JFF), Mohammad Tawil, said that his federation has been demanding the creation of an agricultural insurance fund to provide compensation to farmers and called for joint participation in the fund by the government and the farmers themselves on an equitable basis.

Mr. Tawil referred to Prince Hassan's proposal in 1987 and said it was regrettable to see that the fund has not yet been created.

Mr. Tawil noted that farmers already pay 6 per cent of the total value of their output to the central marketplace in Amman, which absorbs the products, and the middlemen who market the crops. Mr. Tawil suggested that part of the 6 per cent amount should finance the insurance fund.

Referring to the programme of compensation suggested by the minister Friday, Mr. Tawil said that a joint federation-government committee is currently conducting a survey to assess the amount of losses.

Preliminary results of the survey have shown that the frost

which affected the farmlands between Jan. 23 and Jan 30 caused severe damage to 4,646 dunums of land planted with tomatoes, 9,090 dunums grown with marrows, 4,781 dunums of eggplants, 6,709 dunums of potatoes and 3,062 dunums of bananas. All the affected lands, he said, are located in the northern and central parts of the Jordan Valley.

Dr. Wali Abu Gharbieh, dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Jordan, echoed the call for the creation of an agriculture insurance fund to help farmers. Dr. Abu Gharbieh also supported the idea of farmers and the government sharing the costs of providing the compensation.

In Europe and the United States farmers are backed and compensated by the government. Since the agricultural sector is one of the most important sectors in Jordan, the government should similarly create a fund, said Dr. Abu Gharbieh.

But, Dr. Abu Gharbieh opposed the idea of having local insurance companies taking over the job of the projected fund, noting that such an idea was inapplicable in Jordan with poor farmers unable to pay insurance premiums on a regular basis.

Labour minister blasts Israeli practices against workers

AMMAN (J.T.) — A fact-finding mission from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) now on a visit to Jordan was Saturday briefed by Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabariti on the situation in the occupied Arab territories resulting from Israel's arbitrary treatment of Arab workers.

The Israeli authorities have recently escalated their "racist" and "brutal" practices against the Palestinian people, employing various means to evict Arabs from their homeland in order to settle Jewish immigrants in their place, said Mr. Kabariti at a meeting with the mission members.

In reviewing the general living conditions of the Palestinian people under occupation rule, the minister noted that unemployment was rising as people become poorer and their freedom is restricted.

The Israelis are continuing their defiance of the international community by stepping up their settlement programmes and by confiscating Arab-owned land on which to settle Jewish immigrants, the minister added.

According to Mr. Kabariti, the Israeli authorities last year seized 14,013 dunums of Arab-owned land to raise the total area of

Arab land confiscated since the 1967 occupation to 3,045,655 dunums in the West Bank alone. He said in the Gaza Strip the Israelis have so far confiscated 153,475 dunums of land to be used by Jewish immigrants.

The confiscated lands, the minister added, make up 55.4 per cent of the total area of the West Bank and 42.3 per cent of the total area of the Gaza Strip, respectively.

According to Mr. Kabariti the Israelis have set up 238 Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab lands and 35 settlements in the Gaza Strip since the occupation started in 1967. A total of 177,000 Jewish immigrants have settled in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip last year alone, raising to 260,000 the total number of settlers in the occupied territories, the minister noted.

He said that the Israeli authorities make way for such settlements through continued confiscation of Arab-owned land and the eviction of Palestinians by force. The minister urged the ILO to take active steps to implement its own resolutions of 1974 and 1980 which call on all countries to provide technical and economic assistance to the Palestinian people in general and

their workers in particular so that they can resist occupation.

He said that the mission's visit to Jordan comes at a time when the Palestinian intifada has entered its fifth year. The intifada is a popular uprising against repression, inhuman treatment and atrocities committed by the Israeli authorities, the minister said.

Mr. Kabariti voiced the Jordanian government's disappointment over the poor assistance so far offered to the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories in general and the Palestinian workers in particular. He said that the assistance was far below the level of suffering and the tragedies through which the Palestinian people have lived through under occupation.

Jordan calls on the ILO to seriously consider the workers' conditions in the occupied territories to working out a plan to provide material assistance to the Palestinians as provided for by previous ILO resolutions, he said. The minister said that the Israeli authorities are making a mockery of resolutions passed by the ILO and U.N. organisations and refuse to give up occupied territory in compliance with the

U.N. Security Council resolution.

By maintaining its occupation of Arab land and escalating its atrocities against the Arab people, coupled with the construction of more settlements, Israel is endangering peace in the whole region, Mr. Kabariti added.

He said that the Ministry of Labour in Jordan is now providing the ILO mission with its 1991 report on continuing Israeli malpractices against the Palestinian workers, employers and trade unions hoping to help the organisation to expose Israeli illegal practices.

Mr. Kabariti expressed hope that the mission will recommend taking necessary measures for the implementation of an aid programme to the Palestinians under occupation. Previous ILO resolutions, the minister noted, have all condemned Israel's illegal practices, its building of settlements as contrary to international principles and obstructing a peace settlement.

Present at the meeting with the minister were representatives of business and workers who gave an outline of Israel's human rights violations against workers and employers in the occupied lands.



ONE CAUTIONS STEP AT A TIME — A rainfall of the past few days (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Kingdom to get short breather from rains, snow

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The next two days could bring some relief for Jordanians as no rain or snow is forecast.

Department of Meteorology officials said Saturday that with the exit of the last cold front, Jordan was not expected to witness heavy rain or snow fall today and Monday, but the cold polar wind will continue.

Department acting Director Rafik Jamil Shaker said light showers and snow could continue over highlands of 800 metres but the temperatures will continue to be below normal, ranging from 1 degree Celsius at night to 4 degrees Celsius during the day.

According to the Department of Meteorology, the amounts of rain that fell since the beginning of the winter season far exceeded

the general annual rainfall average. A statistical bulletin said that the highest amount was 818 millimetres, recorded at the University of Jordan, while the least was at Al Jafer, where a mere nine millimetres fell in desert areas.

As various rescue and repair teams were reported Saturday still struggling to clear roads of snow, remove fallen trees and repair other damages, press spoke of further landslides along the roads leading to the Jordan Valley resulting in the closure of roads and the collapse of a number of homes and the death of at least seven people.

Civil Defence Department (CDD) teams Friday said that they pulled out the bodies of two young men carried away by the Zarqa River. Search operations continued for 96 hours with the help of helicopters and divers, the CDD said. The CDD said its men

rescued several families whose homes were threatened by the rising water in the streams.

The torrential rain and the melting snow swelled the River Jordan and, according to some reports, the water level rose by at least two metres above the King Hussein Bridge, prompting the Public Security Department (PSD) to announce that the two bridges on the River Jordan will remain closed until the water has subsided. The PSD statement called on travellers across the bridges to refrain from making the trip to the West Bank until further notice.

The PSD Saturday reported that all roads in the Kingdom were open except for the Adasieh-Jordan Valley road and the Dhiban - Al Mnjib - Al Karak roads closed due to landslides and Deir Allah - Abul Zighan road due to the high level of water and the collapse of a bridge.

School closure should not affect curriculum, official says

AMMAN (J.T.) — Keeping schools closed for one extra week at the end of the mid-year school holidays due to the severe weather conditions does not justify and changes in the Ministry of Education's general programmes concerning holidays at the end of school terms, according to the director of general education at the Ministry of Education, Dr. Thousan Obaidat.

The ministry does not feel that extending the mid-year holiday last month for one week will disrupt the present programmes, Dr. Obaidat said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The ministry's various departments around the Kingdom had to order the schools closed and authorised directors of education to take charge of this matter in view of the weather conditions and the snowstorms. Such matters can be dealt with at school with the teachers re-arranging for their plans to be completed on time, Dr. Obaidat added.

He said that should any of these provincial departments feel that schools would not be able to complete the required plans, then they would have to reconsider the programme and increase the number of school periods or ask students to come to school Thursdays in order to compensate for the lost time and finish the required curriculum.

Dr. Obaidat noted that teachers normally take charge of such matters and arrange for the plans to be completed at their own discretion and in a manner which they find fit.

Normally, schools in Jordan are let out for mid-year, or winter holiday, which lasts about 21 days.

Officials call for greater effort to upgrade Arab sport activities

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Youth Saleh Irsheidat returned to Amman Saturday after taking part in the 15th Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports Council meeting held in Rabat, Morocco.

The meetings passed a series of resolutions designed to contribute to improving the level of Arab sport activities and bolstering ties among officials responsible for sports and youth affairs in the Arab World, said Dr. Irsheidat in a statement upon return.

The council passed resolutions and recommendations including one that called on Arab countries to support Morocco's bid to host the 1998 World Cup and the Palestinian Olympic Committee to be accepted as a member of the International Olympic Committee. The minister said that the council has entrusted the Arab Sports Federation to conduct a study on school sports programmes among other decisions.



Saleh Irsheidat

The council called for a meeting by experts on sports and youth activities which will group Arab and African delegations to discuss executive programmes to be carried out by Arab and African groups, and approved the creation of an Arab Academy on Sports in Egypt.

According to the minister, the

council issued a statement voicing support for the Libyan people in the face of a hostile campaign being waged by foreign countries accusing it of being responsible for the Pan Am air crash of 1988.

Also Saturday, a delegation from the Ministry of Youth returned to Amman after taking part in a pan-Arab working camp held in Aswan, Upper Egypt. The 10-day camp included such activities as seminars, dialogues and recreational activities, according to the Ministry of Youth.

It said that Jordan attended the camp activities along with youth groups from Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. The camp activities, said the ministry statement also included tours of historic sites and cultural and scientific institutions in Egypt as well as meetings with notable personalities and officials.

New vehicle licensing department proposed in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Public Security Department (PSD) has allocated JD 200,000 to set up a second station for the licensing of vehicles to operate along with that located in the Marka District, according to Drivers Licensing Department Director Brig. Awni Mismar.

Brig. Mismar was quoted by Al Ra'i Arabic daily as saying that the PSD has already presented designs of the project to the greater Amman Mayor, seeking his help in acquiring a plot of land on which to set up the new station. The station would ease the pressure on Marka station, Brig. Mismar said.

Noting that the station will provide facilities for the licensing of vehicles and drivers, Brig. Mismar said that 68 per cent of the total number of vehicles in the Kingdom are registered at the Amman department.

The new station, he said, will be set up in western Amman while the Marka station in eastern Amman will continue to operate normally. Brig. Mismar reiterated an earlier PSD decision to offer Jordanian holders of Kuwaiti driving licenses new Jordanian licenses provided the Kuwaiti licenses had been valid until Aug. 2, 1990, the day Kuwait was invaded.

So far, he said, the department has issued nearly 7,000 Jordanian licenses to holders of Kuwaiti driving licenses. Others, he said, were issued by the Amman, Irbid and Zarqa departments.

Jordan outlines electricity research

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan took part in a pan-Arab conference on the peaceful use of atomic energy held recently in Tripoli and submitted a working paper on Jordan's aspirations for generating electricity from nuclear energy.

The delegation to the Tripoli meeting was led by Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Secretary General Asem Ghosheh, who said that discussions covered, among other things, scientific research materials related to nuclear science, nuclear reactors and technology and its application to agriculture and food production, medicine, industry, the environment and the exploitation of natural resources.

The conference, which was held between Feb. 2 and Feb. 6, was a scientific demonstration grouping Arab scientists who opened discussions on research in the Arab World and underlined the need for inter-Arab cooperation in nuclear energy matters, with a view to promoting agriculture, health, industrial and other fields, Mr. Ghosheh added.

According to Mr. Ghosheh, Walid Jaouni from the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) and Ali Murr from the Department of Nuclear Energy at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources jointly presented the working paper.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess to open exhibition

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Royal Highness Princess Wijdan Ali will inaugurate Monday an art exhibition by Iraqi artist Sadik Kwaish at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street. The exhibition runs through Feb. 26.

IDB opens new branch

AMMAN (Petra) — The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) has decided to open a branch at the Sahab Industrial Estate in Amman. The measure comes to provide needed financial services to industrialists at the estate and to help finance various industrial projects.

Joint committee to meet Feb. 16.

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian-Tunisian Joint Committee will meet in Amman Feb. 16 under the chairmanship of ministers of industry, trade and economy in both countries. The committee will discuss scopes of bilateral cooperation in the fields of tourism, trade, energy and mineral resources and ways of enhancing it. The Tunisian delegation to the meeting, which will be headed by National Economy Minister Sadeq Rabeh, will arrive in Amman on Feb. 16.

Lower House to meet

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament will meet today under the chairmanship of its Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat and in the presence of the Cabinet members. The meeting will include replies by the government to a query by Deputy Ahmad Oweidi Al Abbadi on technical assistance to the private sector and another by Deputy Mansour Seifeddin Murad on the Jordanian Medical Council and medical specialisation certificates.



A GIFT OF LOVE — The staff of the Amman Philadelphia International Hotel Saturday distributed gifts and food parcels to girl students of the Zameleh Village some 70 kms south of Amman in the wake of the snowstorm. The hotel, which last year adopted the village, has been supplying gifts and food aid to the village children on a weekly basis.

WHAT'S GOING ON

★ Exhibition by Iraqi artist Sahn Al Allaq at the Royal Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition of drawings by the French school's kindergarten children at the French Cultural Centre.

THEATRE

★ Arabic play entitled "Who's There?" at the Royal Cultural Centre — 8 p.m.

GBM and Lexmark executives at the signing of the distribution agreement: (right to left) Giovanni Ghadi, manager of Southern Europe Operations for Lexmark; Mustafa Regibani, general

manager of GBM; Mike Barnes, vice-president of Lexmark Europe; Robert Kikano, division general manager, GBM Personal Systems.

GBM to distribute Lexmark products

AMMAN — Gulf Business Machines EC has been appointed sole regional representative for Lexmark International Inc., which is a worldwide information products company formed nine months ago for the development, manufacture, marketing, distribution and support of personal printers, typewriters and office supplies, and workstation keyboards, according to a company statement.

Lexmark was created through the transfer of majority ownership of IBM's typewriters, printers and keyboards businesses worldwide to the private investment company, Clayton & Dubilier, Inc. of the U.S. IBM, Lexmark management and a group of institutional investors hold the balance of the shares, the state-

ment said. Lexmark products will carry the IBM logo under licence and Lexmark will have access to IBM technology and patents. IBM and Lexmark will work together under a variety of manufacturing, marketing and distribution agreements, with IBM holding a 10 per cent share and a seat on the Lexmark board, the statement added.

The range of IBM printers which Lexmark will supply to GBM will be completely compatible with other professional computer systems. "Printers are an intensely competitive business and having these products will be a great benefit to GBM and our IBM authorised remarketers," says Robert Kikano, division general manager, GBM Personal Systems.

"We are now finalising our distribution plans throughout the region with our remarketers," says Mr. Kikano.

IBM authorised remarketers serviced by GBM are in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Oman and Yemen. GBM was established two years ago as the regional representative of IBM outside Saudi Arabia, according to the statement.

"IBM and Lexmark are strategically aligned through their technology-sharing and marketing agreements," says Mike Barnes, vice-president of Lexmark Europe. "It is a sound business development for Lexmark and GBM to extend that alignment into distribution and support services for the Gulf region."

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Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahd Al Fanek

A budget to make ends meet

It would be extremely useful to prepare a foreign exchange budget as a tool for the good management of the national economy. Such a budget need not be formally approved by the Parliament, but it will not be harmful to make it known to our deputies and economic commentators, to familiarise them with the real situation. Perhaps they would think twice before allowing their imagination to suggest impractical policies based on lack of information or a distorted picture that does not even resemble reality.

Let us try to go through this exercise and draw such a budget, summarising the sources and applications of foreign exchange of the country for the fiscal year 1992, which is relatively a comfortable year. The first result that comes to mind is that ends don't meet. We cannot possibly strike a balance or reconcile sources and requirements through domestic policies and measures, such as austerity measures, and by curbing foreign imports. The gap is evidently too wide for such measures, if they were at all possible and practical.

On the requirement or the debt side of the budget, we need \$2,434 million to finance commodity imports, \$541 million to

repay interest on foreign debt, which will fall due during this year, \$699 million to repay principal installments, due on 1992, \$716 million to settle principal and interest, which fell due in 1991, but were not yet paid, and \$47 million for miscellaneous requirements, thus bringing the requirements in foreign exchange for 1992 to a total of \$4,436 million.

As for the sources of foreign exchange expected in 1992, we start with exports proceeds, which are estimated to yield \$1,225 million. Exports of services (excluding remittances) may secure around \$490 million net. Remittances from expatriates may provide around \$404 million. We may be lucky to receive foreign grants, in the order of \$165 million, and more savings of returning expatriates and repatriated private capital, in the neighbourhood of \$100 million. Furthermore, Jordan may be able to secure soft developmental loans in the order of \$227 million. Thus, under the best of assumptions, total receipts of foreign exchange in 1992 will reach \$2,610 million.

The assumed supervisor of Jordan's foreign exchange budget will easily discover that the net deficit in foreign exchange during 1992 alone will be in the order of \$1,826 million. Such a deficit is

capable of consuming all the foreign assets of the Central Bank in a matter of months, and definitely before the end of the year.

Will the imagined manager of Jordan's foreign exchange budget, under the circumstances, bury his head in the sand, in order not to see the approaching danger? Will he wait for a miracle from heaven to save the situation? Will he call for the reduction of imports by such a huge amount, or will he try to achieve what all developing countries have failed to achieve, that is to convince lenders to grant the country a relief aid, and reschedule their debts, irrespective of what the International Monetary Fund (IMF) may think? Or perhaps the imaginary manager will consider the option of issuing a declaration to condemn economic adjustment programmes supervised by the IMF, and claim that Jordan is under economic and financial siege and purpose of which is to make the country submit politically! All these techniques and false options were used by various Third World countries under the impact of debt crisis, but they all failed. Yet they have some believers and followers here in Jordan. These followers are trying to reproduce the same techniques once more and try to sell their bad product by making a loud noise.

Aid where it belongs

IN A WAY it is good to be reminded that the Arab Gulf states have embarked on an impressive aid programme, in the aftermath of the Gulf conflict. Recent reports speak of Arab Gulf governments disbursing no less than \$6 billion in development aid in 1990, an amount which was four times the previous year's figure of \$1.5 billion. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates were the biggest donors. The list of beneficiaries, however, sheds more light than ever on the seeds of the Gulf crisis that culminated in Iraq invading and occupying Kuwait and the alignment of Arab and non-Arab countries for or against Iraq during the military, political and economic actions against it.

For example, on top of the list of Arab aid recipients for that year alone was Egypt, which received over \$2 billion. Turkey occupied second place followed by Syria. The same Arab Gulf aid beneficiaries are expected to reap even bigger bounties in the wake of the Gulf war in 1991 while others, notably Morocco and Pakistan, are projected to join the bandwagon of aid beneficiaries from the Gulf states in appreciation for their understanding and support during the "Desert Storm" campaign against Iraq.

But that is not all. Recently, the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have formally approved the establishment of a \$10 billion fund to channel development assistance to some of the Arab and non-Arab states whose economies were hit by the Gulf conflict. Jordan of course does not appear on the list of Arab states hurt by the Gulf events in 1991 even though it was the country hardest hit by the crisis after the Iraq and Kuwait. Nor will Yemen or the other Arab states which also had reservations about the resort to non-Arab military means to reverse the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait.

This is indeed a serious issue but not the only one. Another serious issue is, as it had always been, how Arab aid was administered and channelled and on what basis or criteria. In retrospect, had the generous Arab aid programmes been motivated by the desire to eliminate poverty from the Arab World, the promotion of stability and security on the basis of democracy and human rights and the forging of a genuine Arab common market, then most probably inter-Arab disputes and conflicts of the like of the 1990-1991 Gulf catastrophe might have never occurred.

Specifically speaking, why should Russia, for example, become a major recipient of Arab aid, in order to deal with its economic hardships when Sudan, Somalia and scores of other needy Arab countries are kept literally starving? Indeed the list of Arab countries in urgent need of economic assistance is long, and the way things are developing and shaping up, the list is likely to get longer rather than shorter in the coming years. Not that the poorer Arab states should look for handouts from anybody. Rather they should look for and expect an enlightened, balanced and comprehensive Arab aid programme that stands to uplift them from their depressed economies that make them easy prey for extremism and elevate them to new heights in political, economic and social development. The turmoil in Algeria and elsewhere in the Arab homeland has its roots in underdevelopment and economic problems. Even the root causes for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can be traced to an insufficiently balanced development in that country that culminated in making ruinous national decisions without the benefit of pluralistic democracy.

In short, the story of misdirected Arab aid that soared in amounts but decreased in impact is indeed long and painful. If only the donor Arab governments would stop for a minute or two to contemplate the true lessons of last year's Gulf tragedy, then and only then, can the generous Arab support for Arab and non-Arab parties begin to have real impact and appreciation.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i Arabic daily discussed a visit to the Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker noting that the visit is designed to prevent these republics from aligning themselves with Islamic nations. The United States, which had financed the operations of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan against the communists of the Soviet Union under the pretext of helping the Afghan people hold on to their faith, is now turning its attention towards preventing these Muslims from adhering to their faith and coming closer to other Muslim states, said the paper. Washington, through its help to the Afghan rebels had sought to cause harm to the Soviet Union, which it has now helped to dismantle, and was not acting out of a feeling of duty towards helping the Muslims uphold their religion, the paper continued. It said that while the Americans had spent billions of dollars on rockets, tanks and other military equipment for the Mujahideen's operations, it is now turning its back to the Muslims, hindering their attempt to become affiliated to the Islamic Nation and is leaving the Islamic republics without any help. Indeed, the U.S. and its allies are instead trying to steal from the Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union all the nuclear scientists to deprive these republics of the means to enhance their countries' independence and sovereignty, the paper said. Mr. Baker's tour, the paper added, is designed to impose a siege on Islam and prevent the Muslim people from joining their kinsmen to form a real Islamic power in the world. In view of this situation, it added, the Islamic countries should not remain passive but ought to put an end to the American practices through a properly organised move.

Al Dustour daily turned its attention to the American stand with regard to the loan guarantees for Israel criticising what the Americans call a compromise over the issue with Israel as suggested by the U.S. Secretary of State James Baker. The daily said that the U.S. is offering Israel a compromise solution at a time when it continues to issue statements describing the Jewish settlements as an obstacle to peace.

U.N. body aims to work with West in post-cold war era

By Robert Evans
Reuters

GENEVA — Long an arena of Third World and communist battles with the West, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is driving to shape a new image as a forum for cooperation between North and South.

And when UNCTAD holds its eighth summit meeting at Cartagena in Colombia next month, delegations from developing countries are expected to endorse the message that the era of economic and ideological confrontation is over.

"The present world political and economic situation offers a conjuncture of challenges and opportunities... for renewing the cooperative endeavour to promote social well-being for all peoples," says UNCTAD Secretary-General Kenneth Dazdie.

With the end of the cold war and recognition in the so-called south that long-revealed market forces can be an effective motor for development, the Ghanaian Dazdie argues, the way is clear for a new relationship with the North.

Many Third World leaders, including Colombian President Carlos Gaviria Trujillo who will host UNCTAD VIII from February 6-25, say the aim should be to take the 28-year-old organisation back to its roots in "cooperation for development."

Created in 1964 as an organ of



the U.N. General Assembly, it was intended to provide a forum for discussion between developed and developing countries on commodities, debt, shipping, technology and similar issues vital to the South.

But early successes under Argentine economist Raul Prebisch were submerged as many newly-emerging states, enthralled by the prospect of a short-cut to development apparently offered by state socialism, opted for Soviet-style economies.

Western countries and Japan,

alarmed by the Third World's growing political alignment with the Communist Bloc, came to see UNCTAD and its permanent secretariat as generally hostile to their liberal democracies and market-oriented economies.

A parallel process was under way in UNCTAD's U.N. sister organisation UNESCO, where the trade body's promotion of the demand for a "new economic order" was matched by a campaign for a "news information order."

Both bodies increased Western antagonism, and while the then rulers in Moscow happily chalked up what they saw as new victories in the world-wide ideological struggle the international influence of the two organisations was all but destroyed.

At UNCTAD VI in Belgrade in 1983, the United States and other major industrialised states refused to go along with the final political declaration and complained of pro-Marxist bias by the organisation.

Mr. Gaviria, in a message to the 171 member states before the Cartagena meeting, recognised the damage this period had done to the cause of economic development to the Third World.

"Over the years, whether through lack of understanding or real commitment, or because of the atmosphere of confrontation into which our dialogue had fallen, the work of UNCTAD has been losing its relevance in economic negotiations," he said. The Colombian president said

the main issues discussed in the organisation since its foundation and which had always sparked North-South controversy — including commodity prices, debt, barriers to Third World goods — would remain.

"But dealing with them in an atmosphere free from confrontation and discussing them calmly in a climate of genuine cooperation is bound to lead to realistic and more effective solutions," Mr. Gaviria declared.

Some Western diplomats in Geneva, where the UNCTAD secretariat is based, remain sceptical. "UNCTAD is changing not because it wants to but because the world has changed with the collapse of communism," said one European envoy.

"We will have to wait and see where all the pledges of reform take us," said an official of the U.S. mission, whose chief, Ambassador Morris Abram, has been one of the U.N. body's most trenchant critics.

But other diplomats from the North are more sympathetic.

"Many of the developing countries have clearly shown a commitment to reform and to genuine free trade, and we would betray ourselves if we failed to recognise that," said one.

"If we can get the whole question of Third World development — and our responsibility for it — firmly back on the tracks in Cartagena, then that can only be in the long term to the benefit of all of us."

Puritan attitude to politicians' sex life is new phenomenon

By Patrick Worsnip
Reuters

LONDON — For centuries, sexual promiscuity was expected of the world's political leaders and was widely held to be one of the perks of the job.

Only in the late 20th century has the general public, while taking an increasingly permissive view of its own sexual behaviour, stepped up its demands on that of politicians, at least in Anglo-Saxon countries.

Latest victims of the new puritanism have been British Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown, who this week admitted having had an affair with a secretary, and U.S. Democratic contender Bill Clinton, who last month denied a relationship with a singer.

Both men appear to have weathered the storms for the time being, but the long-term effect on their political careers remain to be seen.

Their predicament, sometimes blamed on the spread of democracy and freedom of information, would have seemed incomprehensible to most of the world's politicians throughout the ages. From bad ones like the ancient

Roman emperor Nero to great ones like the 17th century French King Louis XIV, the list of rulers who have maintained mistresses, concubines or harems, indifferent to what their subjects thought, is endless.

In the 16th century, King Henry VIII of England married six wives consecutively, though he was forced to behead two of them and change the national religion — permanently — from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism in order to do so.

Some rulers imposed higher standards on their spouses than on themselves. "Caesar's wife must be above suspicion," Julius Caesar is reported to have said. Women leaders from Cleopatra of Egypt in the 1st century B.C. to Catherine the Great of Russia in the 18th century, have been as noted for their lovers as the men.

The trend — perhaps inevitable in the past when marriages were usually arranged for political reasons, not for love — has continued well into this century. David Lloyd George, Britain's Liberal prime minister in World War I, was described by Encyclopedia Britannica as "incapable of fidelity," but no tabloid newspaper hounded him from office.

In the polygamous Muslim world, King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia, had 45 recorded sons by some 22 different mothers, and at least as many daughters by even more women, according to authors Richard Johns and David Holden.

Even in the United States, President John Kennedy, who appeared to be a model American family man, had his reputation tarnished by allegations of extra-marital affairs that only surfaced after his death in 1963.

It is only in the last 30 years that the private lives of politicians have been exposed to searing public scrutiny in Britain and the United States — to the sneers of commentators in continental Europe who say such matters are irrelevant.

A series of British politicians have been ruined by sex scandals, from Defence Minister John Profumo, who had a liaison with a call-girl in 1963, to Conservative Party Chairman Cecil Parkinson, who had a child by his secretary in 1983.

In the United States, Democratic Senator Gary Hart saw his bid for the presidency collapse after revelations of his association with

a model in 1987.

Why are sex and politics so closely linked? Sidney Crown, a London consultant psychiatrist, says: "It seems that to be successful you have to have enormous energy and aggression. Energy and sexuality are closely related."

But other commentators point simply to the increasingly ruthless tactics of tabloid newspapers, often engaged in fierce circulation wars with each other, which see revelations of scandal among the high and mighty as a way to attract readers.

One such British daily, The Sun, defended its position on Thursday, saying: "In the minds of many people, a man who cheats on his wife might well not be the kind of person they would entrust with running the nation."

The opposite view of the heavyweight press was reflected in the Guardian by Conservative parliamentary Edwina Currie: "Maybe it is time the nation got less hypocritical and less prudent, and recognised in its MPs (members of parliament) only the same imperfections and human failings tolerated in society at large."

"We are not saints — why should you expect us to be?"

E. Europe is playground for traffickers

By Clare Pedrick

ROME — Eastern Europe has always had its own domestic drug production and consumption problems — though the communist leadership never admitted it, say U.N. drug officials. Opium was cultivated in parts of the former USSR, near the borders with the major producer nations, and Poland had a small but thriving poppy growing industry, from which it produced a strong opiate known as compote. Hungary also had a problem, mainly with drugs imported from Poland.

With the end of communism, however, and the freeing of border restrictions, the former East Bloc has become far more attractive to the major drug traders. "Before, these countries couldn't pay with foreign currency, so the

international traffickers didn't bother with them," said Dr. Maria Eleoa Andreotti, a narcotics expert at the U.N.'s International Crime and Justice Research Institute in Rome. "Now their currencies are convertible, and these markets have become far more appetising."

Recent reports from Interpol, the French-based international agency monitoring law enforcement worldwide, show a growing number of drug seizures, mainly heroin, in Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the former Soviet Union. Moscow airport has become a favorite point of entry for heroin imported from Afghanistan, say police officials. In Poland, dozens of laboratories have sprung up producing mainly chemical drugs for the French

and German markets, especially hallucinogens. Warsaw airport has been targeted by the South American traffickers as an important entry point for cocaine.

Storehouses containing small stocks of heroin are known to exist in several locations on the outskirts of Budapest. The stores, mainly controlled by traffickers from the Middle East, are supplied with heroin from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The drugs are sent on via Austria and Czechoslovakia for distribution throughout the rest of Europe. Bulgaria, which for years played a key role in the so-called Balkan Route — a trial which brought drugs from Asia to Europe — continues to be an important distribution point for heroin coming in overland from Turkey.

Eastern Europe is also being used for the laundering of drug money, say officials. Large quantities of drug profits are reported to be entering the former communist countries under cover of the free-for-all of foreign money currently being invested in real estate, restaurants, hotels and the launching of new businesses. Police in some Eastern European countries are undergoing training programmes in the U.S. to learn how to deal with modern crime techniques.

Bot officials say the new democracies have neither the experience nor the infrastructure to cope with the problem. Laws and controls used by Western governments to track drug money deposits have yet to be introduced, they say. — World News Link.

LETTERS

Elections in Romania

To the Editor:

Your article on Romanian elections, which appeared in the Thursday, Feb. 6, issue of the Jordan Times, prompted us to make known a few facts about the topic.

After 46 years, on Feb. 9 1992, the first free local elections in Romania will take place.

They will be held in the context of the democratic process Romania is passing through with a view to consolidating the State of Law.

According to law No. 70/1991, concerning local elections, the mayors and city and county councils are elected for 4-year periods through universal, equal, direct, secret and free vote.

The elections will be monitored by about 200 foreign and 5,000 local observers.

The Romanian government is determined to organise free and fair elections rising to the European and international standard.

The Romanian government has endeavoured to solve all the problems related to elections, including ensuring free transport for students and carrying on electoral propaganda among the military. All necessary steps had been taken by the Romanian government for ensuring the best conditions for free and fair elections.

The electoral campaign ended on Feb. 6.

The number of registered voters on electoral lists is 16,647,728. Eighty four political parties and 8,421 independent candidates have declared their candidacy for the posts of mayors and communal councillors.

Regarding the Washington-based International Republican Institute's report, the Romanian government formulated a reply, in which it mentions among others, that:

The International Republican Institute report tends to believe in mere speculations made by some interviewers, which are not based on facts and which lead to erroneous interpretations of the legislation.

The Romanian government is determined to follow the international standards in observing elections, in line with the European conference for Security and Cooperation documents. The Romanian government took the responsibility of supporting the expenditures for elections, based on decision No. 885/1991.

Regarding the results of local elections and the winner candidate, the provisions of the electoral law are clear beyond any doubt.

The political parties had the possibility to carry on the electoral campaign in the military units, a measure realised by the order of the Romanian minister of defence.

The Romanian government has issued free access, for electoral propaganda, to radio and TV for 120 minutes daily, over a period of five weeks.

N. Anton,
Romanian Embassy,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

U.S., Israel fail to agree on loan guarantees

(Continued from page 1)

Shamir make public U.S. conditions for obtaining the sorely-needed guarantees.

Complicating the issue are the unpredictable effect it may have on Arab-Israeli peace talks, which are due to resume in Washington later this month, and on the Israeli election scheduled for late June.

In testimony to Congress this week, Mr. Baker made it clear that Washington is no longer prepared to finance Israeli policies it regarded as contrary to its own interests.

Israeli fears U.S. linkage of the loan guarantees to Jewish settlement in the occupied land could set a dangerous precedent for future aid requests.

"We think his linkage is bad and dangerous. The question will always be: 'Where will it end?'" said Justice Minister Dan Meridor in a radio interview on Saturday.

Israeli doves meanwhile demanded their hardline government accept Washington's conditions — freeze new settlement building in exchange for the loan guarantees.

Israel's leading peace movement, reacting on the Friday meeting, said the government's settlement drive was damaging the country and demanded Mr.

Mubarak criticises Israel

Meanwhile, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak criticised Israel in remarks published on Friday, saying it was not serious in efforts to bring peace to the Middle East.

"No doubt, Israel made a mistake by advocating policies which suggest to the Arabs — especially the Palestinians — that it is not serious in its approach to peace," Mr. Mubarak said.

His remarks appeared in an early edition of Saturday's Al-Ahram newspaper.

He said Israel must stop building Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab lands and put an end to the expulsion of Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

By Clare Pedrick

LONDON — As his vessel plowed its well-worn route from Singapore to Hong Kong, the ship's captain awoke to find intruders by his bedside. One of them held a knife to his throat. Meanwhile, the rest of the gang went through the ship's safe and cargo before disappearing as silently as they had come, with a haul worth \$17,000.

The attack happened 225 kilometres out of Singapore on Nov. 27, 1991. Just two days later, a few hours south of Singapore, four men held a knife to the jugular vein of another ship's captain and tied him to his bed while they raided his cabin.

Twenty kilometres east of Bintan Island, five men armed with long "parang" knives and a revolver forced their way into the cabin of a third ship's captain. "They tied my hands together and I was threatened with death if I made a noise," the captain later told police. "My cabin was ransacked and all articles of value taken."

All three masters and their crew were victims of what mariners have always feared almost as much as the sea itself — pirates. These modern-day buccaniers wear no eye-patches and prefer cash, video cassette recorders and computers to the traditional booty of golden doubloons. But their numbers are increasing sharply and with it the daring of their escapades, say investigators.

The coasts of Brazil and West Africa, especially Nigeria and Sierra Leone, are notorious for pirate attacks. But even more perilous, say experts, are the waters of Southeast Asia. Of these, nowhere is more heavily infested with pirates than the southern Malacca Straits, bordered by the territories of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. By Nov. 1, 1991, the Singapore National Shipping Association, which represents 178 local and foreign shipowners and is the largest shipping group in Southeast Asia, had received 50 reports of piracy from its members. That figure compares with 33 during the whole of 1990 and just three cases reported in 1989.

At the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in Barking outside London, investigators have compiled a confidential report on the piracy business, which they say

costs the shipping industry an estimated \$200 million a year in actual losses, and far more in terms of loss of confidence and psychological damage to the ships' crews and captains. "The shipping industry, the trade unions and the seafarers are getting very jittery about the problem of piracy, particularly in and around the Malacca Straits," said Eric Ellen, director of the IMB, an international organisation set up 10 years ago to combat all forms of crime on the high seas. "The attacks are getting much more frequent, and there is much more brutality."

According to Mr. Ellen, a former chief constable for the Port of London police, the number of reported piracy attacks represents a fraction of the real figure. "I'm sure there are a lot more than we know about," he said. "The shipowners often don't report attacks, perhaps because they don't want the ship to be delayed, or because only a small amount was taken, but the industry is doing itself a grave disservice in not reporting."

Under cover of darkness, the pirate gangs emerge from their hideouts on the dozens of small islands that dot the area. They use speedboats to reach their targets. In the time it takes to throw a grappling hook onto the ship's rails, the pirates are up and over, threatening the crew and captain with weapons, usually knives, but sometimes guns. At the lower end of the piracy scale, the attackers expect to get away with the contents of the ship's safe — normally cash kept for wages, port fees and other expenses — as well as the crew's personal valuables and as much of the cargo as they can fit into the launches in which they arrived. Altogether, the haul is unlikely to amount to more than a few thousands dollars' worth. "I call them maritime muggers," said Ken Luck, an assistant director at the IMB, and like Mr. Ellen, a former officer in the British police.

But a far bolder breed of pirate is giving greater cause for concern, say officials. These seafaring robbers are well-organised, well-trained and they set their sights high. "We know of at least six cases where they have taken the whole cargo, but there must be others," said Mr. Ellen. As the stakes increase, so too do the

Pirates make comeback

risks for the crew and captain. Last year, a gang of 25 pirates wearing ski-masks and brandishing knives and machine guns murdered Indonesian Chief Officer Mohammad Dahalan, 33, on the Sprint Star, a 200-tonne coastal cargo vessel, which was sailing close to Tioman Island, off the coast of Malaysia, en route from Singapore to Phnom Penh. The gang tied up the captain and the rest of the crew in the storeroom and took over the controls, heading north for 14 hours before anchoring and unloading the entire cargo of cars, motorcycles, TV sets, video cassette recorders, cigarettes and clothing — worth a total of more than \$1 million — onto two other vessels that had drawn alongside.

The Sprint Star episode points to several worrying trends, say investigators at the IMB. Most alarmingly for the mariners themselves, it shows pirates are prepared to show considerable physical cruelty, when once they were content simply to threaten it. "We're going to see more deaths than we have been previously," said Mr. Ellen. "Crews are getting more nervous by the day. Some crews have been kept manacled for days at a time."

The Sprint Star attack also appears to confirm what investigators have long suspected — that some of the gangs are linked to organised crime syndicates, especially those operating out of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Bangkok, whose other activities include drug trafficking, prostitution, gambling and the smuggling of illegal immigrants to the U.S. A study of the pirates' modus operandi reveals a distinct pattern, says Mr. Ellen. "They seem to work with great precision. They act quickly, in a disciplined way, and they seem to be very well organised."

The pirates responsible for the hijacking of the Sprint Star have not been caught, but investigators say they were almost certainly Thai. The crew later reported that the attackers spoke to each other in Thai, and the handcuffs used to tie them up were made in Thailand. According to Mr. Ellen, these may well be the same pirates who previously terrorised the Vietnamese boat people on the high seas, robbing and killing the men and raping the women. Most of the attacks of piracy against the boat people were be-

lieved to have been the work of Thais, said Mr. Ellen, and there have been no further incidents since April 1990. "We believe these attacks are no longer being carried out against the boat people, but against commercial cargoes," he said.

For sheer boldness, the case of the seajacking of a ship called Martha takes some beating. Sailing under a Cypriot flag, the vessel was boarded by four armed pirates during a voyage from Bangkok to Busan. The intruders overpowered the seven-man crew, handcuffed them and locked them below while they set to work on the ship itself, repainting the funnel, hoisting a different flag and changing the name, using stencils they had brought along to do the job. The pirates sailed the ship for two days before dropping anchor and offloading the cargo onto a barge with a forklift truck. After a further two days sailing northwards, the gang finally abandoned ship, leaving the crew with no radio and only part of the ship's charts, to find its way as best it could to Bangkok.

Changing the name and appearance of a vessel is easier than it sounds, say people in the shipping business. The pirates sail the vessel to a quiet cove, repaint and rename it, and supply it with new papers, good forgeries obtained from contacts in Singapore or Bangkok. "Even the skipper can find it hard to identify a skillfully overhauled ship," said a marine insurer in Kuala Lumpur, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The theft of an entire ship — a trend that has emerged over the past two years — is not usually carried out for the cargo, but for the vessel itself, say investigators. Sometimes the stolen ship is sold almost immediately. The gang may first use it to carry out other acts of piracy before disposing of it. Or it may decide to use it as a vehicle for perpetrating any of a whole host of other frauds, which can range from insurance scams to the selling of non-existent cargoes, a favorite ruse on the maritime crime circuit. Whatever the case, the crew is a problem to get rid of. Most often, say IMB officials, they are set adrift in boats. But in at least one case, they were simply thrown overboard.

The Philippine coast has emerged as a danger spot for the hijacking of vessels. "Ships are

being stolen to order," said Mr. Ellen. A tough response by the Philippine government has had some success in combatting the problem. "They ordered a shoot-to-kill policy against pirates, but I fear it will only cause a lull in the operation, and it is likely to start up again," said Mr. Ellen.

In May last year, the Philippine government arrested seven members of an Asian syndicate operating out of Manila. They are believed to have been responsible for at least five hijackings, including that of a government-owned oil tanker.

But Mr. Ellen is critical of some other Southeast Asian governments — though he declines to name them — which, he says, have failed to tackle the problem. "Some nations are hunkering their responsibility," said Mr. Ellen. "There are many safe havens for these pirates." In February 1992 a meeting jointly called by the IMB and the Malaysian police force will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital. For the first time, it will bring together representatives from law enforcement in the region and from the shipping industry.

The latter has stepped up its calls for action. The Federation of ASEAN Shipowners Association in Kuala Lumpur has voiced fears that the pirate attacks could lead to a loss of confidence and hurt the economy in Southeast Asia. Among the organisation's recommendations is the mounting of joint maritime patrols in the worst affected areas. One of the main obstacles in catching pirates is that most of the attacks happen outside territorial waters, often in zones that are considered highly sensitive for political reasons. "Because of the political divisions in the area, it's very difficult for us to apprehend pirated vessels," said Capt. Robert Garcia, a Philippine Coast Guard officer responsible for anti-piracy operations. "What's needed is really a concerted effort among the countries of the region, so we can pursue vessels from one country to the next."

Also helping the pirates is the fact that crews are getting smaller, thanks to computerisation on board, and that the distances at sea are vast. The pirates are usually well-informed about their targets and the cargo they are carrying, and they use radar to

check that they are not being followed. And, in spite of the dangers, most crews continue to be unarmed. Often, their only weapons are the ship's high-pressure hoses, which can be used to wash intruders off deck. One shipowner recently devised a more unusual deterrent. Said IMB assistant director Ken Luck: "I was at a conference in Tokyo and one shipowner said he had sewn fish-hooks into nets and festooned them around the vessel to stop them climbing up."

Mr. Luck himself has come up with another effective method — a panic button which sets off a system of hyperstrobe light and high decibel sirens to disorientate intruders. The drawback is the cost — several thousand dollars per vessel, and the fact that it relies on the pirates being spotted in time. The IMB does not recommend issuing guns to crew members. "We advocate a passive reaction, because if you attack someone whose original motivation is greed, you then give him the motivation of revenge, and at that point you may find yourself with a greater problem than you know how to handle," said Mr. Luck. Added Mr. Ellen: "How do you solve a problem like this? You can arm crews, but then they have to be trained and psychologically prepared to shoot and kill... you would really need an army to defend against pirate attacks in that region."

At present, the evidence suggests that the pirates are confident their attacks will go unpunished. Even when they are caught, their arrest may not signal the end of their criminal career: top Filipino pirate Emilio Chango was arrested, convicted and sentenced, but then allowed to go free by the courts.

"Our system of justice makes it very difficult to convict a terrorist or a pirate," admitted Philippine Coastguard officer Capt. Garcia. "These people are rich. They can afford to bribe people and they can hire the best lawyers." To prove his point, Capt. Garcia cites the case of the M.V. Eastern Galaxy. Pirates attacked the ship during a voyage back to March 1990, but the plan failed and the gang was arrested. Capt. Garcia: "We found the pirates on board, but the courts said they'd just boarded the vessel to get a lift. So they were released." — World News Link.

Akawi's funeral turns into national demonstration

(Continued from page 1)

checkup of Akawi and a police investigation after seeing the detainee's bruises.

Dr. Michael Baden, a pathologist called in by the family, said Friday that Akawi suffered from previously undiagnosed blockage of the arteries and that he died of a heart attack.

The heart attack, Dr. Baden said, was triggered by the "physical and emotional pressures" of detention. Dr. Baden, a former chief medical examiner of New York City, said Akawi sustained chest bruises during interrogation. Had Akawi not been arrested and detained, he would not have died, Dr. Baden concluded.

Akawi was rounded up Jan. 22 in a sweep of supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a radical PLO faction that has claimed responsibility for killing Jewish settlers in the occupied lands.

On Saturday, some 4,000 mourners braved heavy rain to follow Akawi's green coffin from Wadi Joz to Al Aqsa.

Faisal Hussein, a top advisor to the Palestinian peace negotiators, and his political rival, senior PFLP supporter Riyad Malki, marched in the front lines.

The PFLP staunchly opposes the peace talks, while Mr. Hussein has been a leading figure in getting the Palestinians to the negotiating table.

Scores of young men wearing red-and-white checkered scarves, a sign of support for the PFLP, shook their fists in the air and chanted "struggle, struggle."

When the coffin was carried into the Al Aqsa Mosque, mourners clapped wildly and then stood for a moment of silence as the Palestinian flag was raised. Outside, youths climbed up the mosque and planted a Palestinian flag on its leaden dome.

Akawi's death had raised new questions about the methods of the Shin Bet which interrogates Palestinians and runs a network of informers to keep tabs on the occupied lands.

Liberal Israeli legislators have asked for an independent investigation of Akawi's death, in addition to the police probe already under way.

The Israeli human rights group B'tselem has said five Palestinians have died during Shin Bet interrogations since the 1987 start of the Palestinian uprising. Two others have committed suicide during breaks in interrogation.

FIS, Algerian security locked in street battles

(Continued from page 1)

from bullet wounds suffered at Sidi Bel Abbes, 500 kilometres west of Algiers, according to hospital sources who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Officials in Sidi Bel Abbes said that more than 150 people were arrested Friday after violence broke out near the Abu Bakr Es Seddik mosque in the centre of town. Most of those arrested were between 15-25 years of age and were still being held on Saturday, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The total number of arrests nationwide was not immediately available. Officials on Friday said at least 80 people had been arrested.

Witnesses and fundamentalist sources said Saturday that 80 people were arrested in Bordj El Kiffan, near the capital, and 55 in

Calef, 125 miles west of Algiers, and dozens of others in the eastern city of Annaba and in Saida and Tiemcen in the West.

The deadliest confrontations took place in Batna and Khenchela in the east, Medea and the capital of Algiers, which all reported fatalities.

Police and troops variously fired bullets, water cannon and tear gas to scatter crowds in Algiers, Oran, Constantine, Annaba, Batna, Bechar, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Khenchela, Medea, Mostaganem, Saida, Setif, Sidi Bel Abbes, Tebessa and Tiemcen, witnesses and Algerian radio reported Friday.

Police Saturday tore down barricades of tires, cement blocks, rocks and other material constructed by protesters on national highway and city streets during the height of the violence.

By Nao Nakamishi

Router

KERPEN — Germany's Kerpen rubbish dump houses the largest garbage sorting plant in Europe. But it's so discreet you'd hardly know it was there.

High-tech machinery, including strainers and magnets, sifts through 100,000 tonnes of municipal rubbish every year and picks out about 60 per cent for recycling.

Paper, metal, wood, glass, organic material and some plastics are carried away to be reused, while the rest is buried behind a screen of trees.

"It has become a sort of place for a pilgrimage," Hans-Walter Erasmy, spokesman of Trineken Entsorgung GMBH, which runs the plant, told Reuters. "People

have come from all over the world to see our plant."

Interest and demand for such a plant has grown considerably in the last few years as the world seeks a more efficient way to reduce rubbish.

"We plan to build 20 to 25 plants in Germany over the next few years, in addition to five we have now," Mr. Erasmy said.

Last month Germany — saddled with ever-increasing waste — introduced regulations aimed at slashing the amount of packaging, which makes up about a third of the 40 million tonnes of garbage the country produces each year.

Companies must now take back packaging after using it to transport their products.

Japanese firms can no longer leave behind piles of cartons, papers and styrofoam after ex-

porting electronic goods, such as Hi-Fi sets, to Germany. They have to take the rubbish back to Japan or find someone to take care of it for a price.

The final stage of the regulations is due to come into effect in 1993 when shops will be forced to take back all packaging, including plastic bags, wrapping paper or even chocolate boxes, from consumers.

Frightened of the mess shoppers might leave behind, more than 400 firms, including Germany's largest — such as Bayer AG and Wella AG — have joined forces to set up a recycling system. They hope to collect 80 per cent of the country's packaging and sort out about 80 per cent for recycling.

If they succeed, the last stage

of the regulations will be postponed.

Since September, their joint venture — Duales System Deutschland GMBH (DSD) — has been providing consumers with yellow garbage bins for packaging which they empty every four weeks free of charge.

They have also put separate containers for brown, green and clear glass bottles, as well as paper packages, on each block.

"It will cost about two billion marks to collect the country's about 100 billion packages for recycling each year," said Petra Robb, spokeswoman for Duales System Deutschland in Bonn. "But the industry has no other choice."

The Federal Cartel Office approved the regulations on condition that any producer could

join the recycling scheme. However, the European Community (EC) has expressed concern.

The European Commission has received numerous complaints from the industry outside Germany alleging the scheme is an unjustified barrier to trade. There is also concern at the cartel implications of competitors working together in DSD.

The commission has already warned Bonn informally about its misgivings over the trade aspect and is likely to decide in the next few weeks whether to take legal action over the scheme.

Those taking part in the scheme mark their products with a "green dot" and are calling on consumers to buy goods stamped with it.

"We expect the regulation to

change the market eventually," said Herbert Gehring of the Environment Ministry. "Packages which can be recycled easily will get profit margins over the others." "We see the package rule as a pilot regulation. Similar rules will follow in other areas such as printed matters, cars and electronics," said Mr. Gehring.

Manufacturers should take responsibility for the waste management of their products. They should no longer be allowed to forget about garbage dumps where their products eventually land, he said.

Asked about the prospects of the packaging regulation, Mr. Gehring said he was confident the system would work. "For the first time, the industry has reacted very quickly and is working

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Russian vice president calls for economic state of emergency

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi threw down a political gauntlet before Boris Yeltsin Saturday and called for a one-year state of economic emergency to avoid the country's ruin.

Mr. Rutskoi did not criticise Mr. Yeltsin by name, but he told nearly 3,000 Russian nationalists that government policies are leading to the "economic genocide of the Russian people."

"There is a solution — to declare an economic emergency," said Mr. Rutskoi, an Afghan war hero who was chosen by Mr. Yeltsin last year as a vice presidential running mate to garner support among the military and ex-Communists.

In the months since the failed hardline Communist coup last August, Mr. Rutskoi has emerged as the champion of Mr. Yeltsin's opponents, criticising the decision to lift price controls last month and fanning discontent over the growing shortages of consumer goods.

People across the political spectrum have criticised Mr.

Yeltsin for introducing reforms piecemeal and for allowing prices on consumer goods to rise by an average of 350 per cent without turning state-controlled farms and businesses over to private owners.

Mr. Rutskoi, wearing civilian clothes, addressed the Congress of Civic and Patriotic Forces, a loose movement of orthodox religious believers, nationalists, anti-Semites and Russian imperialists.

The congress's goal was to mount a unified opposition out of the gaggle of tiny hardline groups that formed after the Communist Party was disbanded following the August coup attempt.

More anti-Yeltsin protests were planned for Sunday at a rally organised by members of the former Communist Party. Mr. Yeltsin banned the party after the coup attempt.

Dozens of men in the standing-room only audience at the Rossiya Cinema House wore military uniforms from the pre-Soviet period including Czarist guards and Cossack cavalry units, complete with swords and tall for

caps. Above the dais hung a black, yellow and white Czarist banner.

In the lobby outside the downtown theatre, activists sold political and religious literature.

Mr. Rutskoi, in his speech and in a two-page article published today in the former Communist Party daily Pravda, did not specify what steps he would take to improve the economy.

"An economic state of emergency should be introduced, if only for one year, and a comprehensive plan for transformations should be worked out to prevent the country from being ruined completely," Mr. Rutskoi said in the Pravda article.

Mr. Rutskoi blamed the Russian economy's tattered state on "the overall power crisis — or rather lack of power — and anarchy" from too much freedom.

CIS leaders meet

Meanwhile leaders of the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) met Saturday to tackle their economic problems, but Ukraine cast a shadow on the

proceedings by saying it could not take any important decisions.

The Moscow meeting, bringing together prime ministers of the new independent states, was due to discuss easing trade barriers among the 11 members, funding for the troubled armed forces and coordinating Western export credits.

But leaders from five republics — Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan — were absent from the meeting at the plush Oktyabr Hotel.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Vitold Fokin remained in Kiev to fight off a parliamentary motion of no confidence in his government. Delegation members said they could not take any decisions on the more important items on the agenda.

"The most important divergences this morning were that some delegations tried to put some republics, including Ukraine, on an unequal footing," Vadim Dolganov, press attache of the Ukrainian mission in Moscow, told reporters.

Bush calls for good living to cut health costs

WASHINGTON (AP) — President George Bush is throwing "personal responsibility" into the health care debate, saying Americans could save billions of dollars just by exercising more, drinking and smoking less, eating better and practicing safe sex.

Above all, take your children to get shots, Mr. Bush advised Friday in a second day of promoting his suggested alternatives to Democratic calls for a bigger government role in health care.

"Maybe I am a little old-fashioned, but I believe personal responsibility has a lot to do with making America a better country," Mr. Bush told a San Diego Rotary Club audience Friday night.

"Good health equals a change in the health care system plus a change in the way we act," he said. "If you exercise and eat right and don't smoke (or) abuse drugs and drink less and avoid risky sexual behaviour, you'll live longer, and America will live better."

U.S., Germany to explore ways to attract Soviet nuclear scientists

WASHINGTON (AP) — Germany and the United States are looking for ways to encourage Soviet nuclear scientists to come to the West and keep radical nations from attracting their expertise, U.S. officials say.

Secretary of State James Baker and his German counterpart, Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, are to discuss the issue when they meet in Germany next week, the officials said Friday.

Among proposals under consideration are finding ways to place Soviet scientists at American universities and private research facilities.

"The allies are looking at ways to attract their scientists," said a U.S. official who insisted on anonymity.

Japanese leaders also have expressed interest in joining the United States in trying to prevent countries like Libya and Iran from gaining Soviet nuclear expertise, officials said.

Word of the Baker-Genscher meeting came after the White House announced that President George Bush has assigned a weapons expert to work with the

former Soviet republics to keep their scientists and their expertise out of unfriendly hands.

Robert L. Gallucci also will help in converting the old Soviet state-run defence establishment to peaceful commercial enterprises, and assist in the coordination of humanitarian and educational needs.

Mr. Baker will see Genscher in Frankfurt Monday before witnessing the dispatch of U.S. cargo planes carrying emergency food and medical relief to the former Soviet republics.

Mr. Baker began his discussions with Genscher in Prague, Czechoslovakia, last week while they were attending a European security conference foreign ministers' meeting.

The United States wants to set up a Western-financed clearing house to help find jobs for Soviet nuclear scientists and so prevent them from selling their expertise to hostile countries, the New York Times said.

The programme would pair the talents of nuclear scientists from the former Soviet Union with the needs of foreign investors, uni-

versities, research organisations and governments, the Times said Saturday.

The plan would focus on finding jobs for the 2,000 to 3,000 scientists who have the advanced skills needed to make and modernise nuclear weapons.

The Times also reported that leaders of the U.S. anti-missile defence research programme, popularly known as Star Wars, were seeking to buy technology from the former Soviet Union.

Officials of the Strategic Defence Initiative Organisation (SDIO) are particularly interested in buying prototypes of a nuclear power system that would orbit in space, the Times reported.

Aviation Week magazine said Friday that SDIO was also planning to recruit more than 1,000 former Soviet scientists and engineers.

It said SDIO had concluded a survey of available Soviet anti-ballistic missile technology last year and identified U.S. state laboratories and private companies to work on each of the acquired technologies.

Miyazawa faces crucial electoral test

TOKYO (AP) — Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa's 3-month-old administration faces an important test Sunday in an election for a vacant parliament seat that could influence its future.

A loss by the governing party in the by-election is likely to embolden opposition parties which launched a parliamentary boycott Wednesday, demanding that leading politicians and others be summoned to testify on recent bribery scandals.

Analysts say the balloting — the first for a parliamentary seat since Mr. Miyazawa assumed his post in November — may also indicate how the governing Liberal Democrats will fare in a general upper house election set for July.

Mr. Miyazawa's popularity has slumped as a result of a series of bribery scandals, growing tensions with the United States, and the failure of key administration-backed bills in parliament.

Support for his administration fell by 3.7 percentage points in January to 40.3 per cent, while the disapproval rate climbed to 43.2 per cent, according to a poll by the newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun.

The election, in Nara Prefecture in western Japan, pits Liberal Democratic candidate Nobuharu Enoki, 52, against Yukibisa Yoshida, 65, backed by the powerful Rengo Labour Union and Socialist and Democratic Socialist parties. More than 1 million people are eligible to vote.

The election was called to fill a vacancy caused by the death in December of Kazuo Shinsaka, a Rengo-backed legislator.

An opposition victory could signal "an early fall of the Miyazawa administration, even before the general election in July, because the contest is regarded as an indication of public sentiment," said Ryotaro Iizuka, a political commentator and professor at Tokyo's Nihon University.

Armenia asks for Iranian mediation in enclave dispute

NICOSIA (AP) — Armenia's Foreign Minister met Saturday with his Iranian counterpart and called on Iran to help solve Armenia's territorial dispute with Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Tebzan Radio quoted the Armenian minister, Raffi Ovanisyan, as saying: "We seek a peaceful solution... and we call on Iran to use its influence to solve that problem."

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati answered: "We shall investigate the issue and will do our best to solve the problem," said the radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp.

Mr. Velayati said the clashes between forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan were in neither side's interests and noted that Azerbaijan also has requested Iranian mediation, the radio said.

Iran's own Azerbaijan province shares borders with both the ex-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and with Armenia, both of which are now independent states.

Fighting for control of Nagorno-Karabakh has escalated sharply in the past few weeks. At least 1,000 people have been killed in four years of battling over the Armenian-populated enclave.

EC faces new challenges after treaty signing

MAASTRICHT, Netherlands (Agencies) — Signatories to the Maastricht treaty on European unity are barely dry but already facing a debate on how to finance its new ambitions and respond to pressure to expand its membership.

The signing of the 189-page treaty on European unity by the 12 EC member states Friday was celebrated with a marching band, flying flags and champagne toasts in this Dutch city, site of negotiations last December to finalise the agreement.

The two documents, which foreign and finance ministers signed on behalf of their countries, cement EC plans to create a superblock with a single market, one currency and a unified voice on the world stage.

"This is a historic moment for the 300 million-plus inhabitants of the European Community," Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers told the assembled political elite of Europe.

Even as the EC hailed this achievement, the old battle over what the Community should aspire to be remained unresolved.

European Commission President Jacques Delors made clear that his vision is a federal one — a kind of United States of Europe with strong central institutions.

"I must say that for me the federal construction remains the only one that permits clearly the sharing out of tasks and transfer

India retracts statement on nuclear capability

NEW DELHI (R) — New Delhi's Foreign Minister Madhav Singh Solanki Saturday retracted a statement indicating that India was a threshold nuclear power.

Mr. Solanki told a news conference: "(A) bomb is part of defence preparedness and we have our defence preparedness."

He initially refused to elaborate on the statement in response to persistent questioning, saying it was primarily a Defence Ministry matter.

"We would not like to go into details," he said.

But his ministry said later that Mr. Solanki had meant that Pakistan had a bomb as part of its defence preparedness while India had its own forms of defence.

"Their bomb, our preparedness," a ministry spokesman said.

India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, insists that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. The ministry said that policy was unchanged.

Mr. Solanki was replying to a question on whether India would consider developing a nuclear weapon in the light of a Washington Post report quoting Pakistan's top foreign affairs official as saying it could assemble at least one nuclear "device."

Ghali wants Germany in U.N. council

HAMBURG (R) — U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali wants to expand the world body's Security Council to take in five more permanent members, including Germany, Der Spiegel magazine reported Saturday.

It said Dr. Ghali, who took over at the beginning of the year as the U.N. chief, wanted to expand from five to 10 the number of permanent members of the Security Council.

Besides Germany, he wanted India, Brazil, Japan and Nigeria to join the Council, the news magazine said in its latest edition.

Der Spiegel said Hungary and most of the nations of the Third World were in favour of the powerful united Germany becoming a permanent member of the Council.

The Council has five permanent members — the United States, France, China, Britain and Russia, which took over from the former Soviet Union.

Earlier this week, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl told the Wall Street Journal Europe he was not interested in seeking a permanent German seat on the Security Council.

"That is not an issue," he said.

But he added that Germany's role should include sending troops on U.N. peace missions.

"We have the obligation to assume more responsibility on an international scale," Mr. Kohl was saying by the newspaper.

Germany's constitution prevents Bonn from sending troops outside the NATO area.

Dr. Ghali announced the first stage of a major U.N. staff shake-up Friday designed to streamline the organisation and make it more efficient.

It will involve a net reduction



of 14 high-level posts and the elimination of almost as many separate departments and offices whose functions will be absorbed or covered by other administrative arrangements.

The U.N. Secretariat, sometimes criticised as unwieldy and bureaucratic, has about 7,000 employees in New York with a similar number divided between offices in Geneva and Vienna.

The last major staff reshuffle was carried out by Dr. Ghali's predecessor, Javier Perez de Cuellar, in November 1986.

A U.N. official said that became known as the "Halloween Day Massacre," prompting some reporters to dub the current shake-up, prematurely, as the "Valentine's Day Massacre."

The real massacre was carried out by Chicago gangsters on seven rivals on St. Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 1929.

former soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister, Vladimir Petrovsky, now a Russian ambassador at large, is being brought in as an undersecretary-general to head one of two newly created

departments for political affairs.

Mr. Petrovsky is a familiar figure at the United Nations, where he was a secretariat official in the 1960s and later headed the Soviet Foreign Ministry's International Organisation Department.

The other U.N. Political Affairs Department will be headed by Undersecretary-General James Jonah of Sierra Leone, whose present department is one of those being discontinued.

Working under him will be Giandomenico Picco of Italy, who won prominence last year for helping secure the release of hostages held in Lebanon and was recently promoted to assistant secretary-general.

Dr. Ghali's chief of staff will be Assistant Secretary-General Jean-Claude Aime, a Haitian who served as a U.N. Middle East troubleshooter. The senior political adviser will be Assistant Secretary-General Alvaro De Soto, a Peruvian who was chief U.N. negotiator at talks that halted the civil war in El Salvador.

The new head of the Department of Public Information is Undersecretary-General Eugene Wyzner, Poland's U.N. representative before joining the secretariat in 1982. He has headed the U.N. Department of Conference Services, now being folded into the Department of Administration and Management.

The Office for Special Political Affairs will be renamed the Office for Peacekeeping Operations under its present chief, Undersecretary-General Marmar Gouling of Britain, and reinforced with the addition of Assistant Secretary-General Kofi Annan of Ghana.

Column 80000

Twin sisters set to make record debut at 100

TOKYO (R) — Twin sisters are to make their recording debut this month at the age of 100, Japanese newspapers said. Reports said Kin Narita and her twin Gin Kanie, who will be 101 on Aug. 1, would record some songs with children for a compact disc. It was unclear whether they would be the oldest artists ever to launch a recording career. The category is not listed in the Guinness Book of Records. Mr. Kin (which means "gold") and Gin ("silver") became a hot property in Japanese show business this year with the success of a television commercial they made for a mail order firm.

'Good samaritan' ordered to pay crook \$25,000

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — A "good samaritan" U.S. taxi driver who captured a fleeing mugger by pinning him against a wall with his cab has been ordered to pay \$25,000 for breaking the crook's leg. A San Francisco jury decided Thursday that Charles Holton, 51, used excessive force when he pinned Ocie McClure to a wall. The jury awarded Mr. McClure \$24,595. According to police reports, Mr. Holton, who has driven a cab for 25 years, saw Mr. McClure robbing a Japanese tourist in May 1989 and gave chase. Mr. McClure, now serving a 10-year prison term, asked for \$32,000 for his injuries, plus an additional sum for pain and suffering. His leg was broken in two places and required three operations. Mr. McClure's lawyer said he doubted his client would see a penny of the award since it would be used to reimburse the city for his medical treatment. Mr. Holton said he wants to appeal the jury's decision.

Deadly spider on walkabout bites back

SYDNEY (R) — An Australian office worker walked around for more than three hours with one of the world's deadliest spiders in his left shoe before it finally bit him. Peter Melville put on his shoes, walked a kilometre from his home on Sydney's North Shore, took a 45-minute train trip to work and then walked 300 metres to his city office. The funnel-web spider, which had apparently set up home in his shoe overnight, bit him once and a half hours later. "It was a really sharp pain, so I took off my shoe to have a look and this big spider ran out and scared the hell out of me," said Mr. Melville. He was rushed to hospital by ambulance but released after tests showed he had only a small amount of venom in his blood. Doctors said it appeared the cramped spider was unable to unleash its full dose of poison.

Dubliner stuck to pub toilet

DUBLIN (R) — A man got stuck to the toilet in a Dublin pub after vandals coated it with superglue. The entire bowl had to be wrestled from the floor so that man and bowl could be carried by stretcher to hospital where staff managed to free him. "The poor fellow was absolutely mortified as you can imagine," said the fire officer called to the scene. "The moral is: Don't sit on any public toilet bowls."

Reagan gets surprise 81st birthday party

SIMI VALLEY, California (AP) — Former President Ronald Reagan celebrated his 81st birthday with a surprise party at his presidential library. About 150 library visitors, many of them school children, were taken aback when Mr. Reagan walked through the lobby to a cake bearing an American flag and the words "Happy birthday Mr. President." "Well, this is the most wonderful anniversary of my 39th birthday I've ever had," Mr. Reagan said, cutting the cake and taking a big bite. Mr. Reagan, who said his wife, Nancy, had other commitments, launched into an anti-smoking speech. "Here I am on the 42nd anniversary of my 39th birthday and I never smoked," he said. "If you ever get tempted by that, stay away." He said. Afterward, Mr. Reagan's staff planned a private lunch with their boss. Staff members got Mr. Reagan a protective helmet with the words "ranch boss" to keep wood chips and sawdust out of his eyes and ears when he's chopping wood at the Reagan ranch north of Santa Barbara.